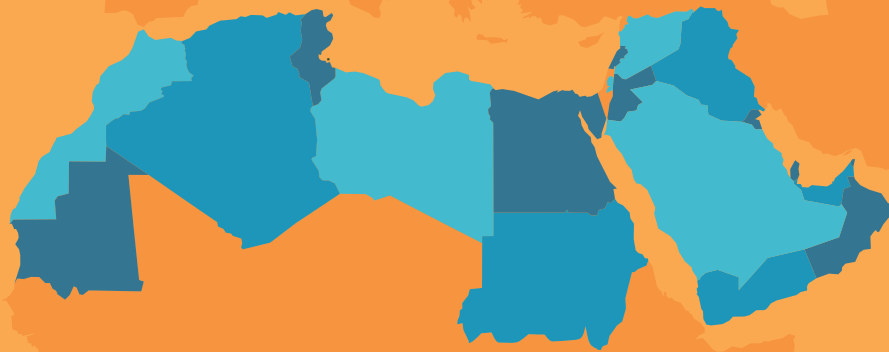




الباروميتر العربي  
ARAB BAROMETER

# Gender-Based Violence and Sources of Support in the Middle East and North Africa

March 2025



MaryClare Roche  
Princeton University

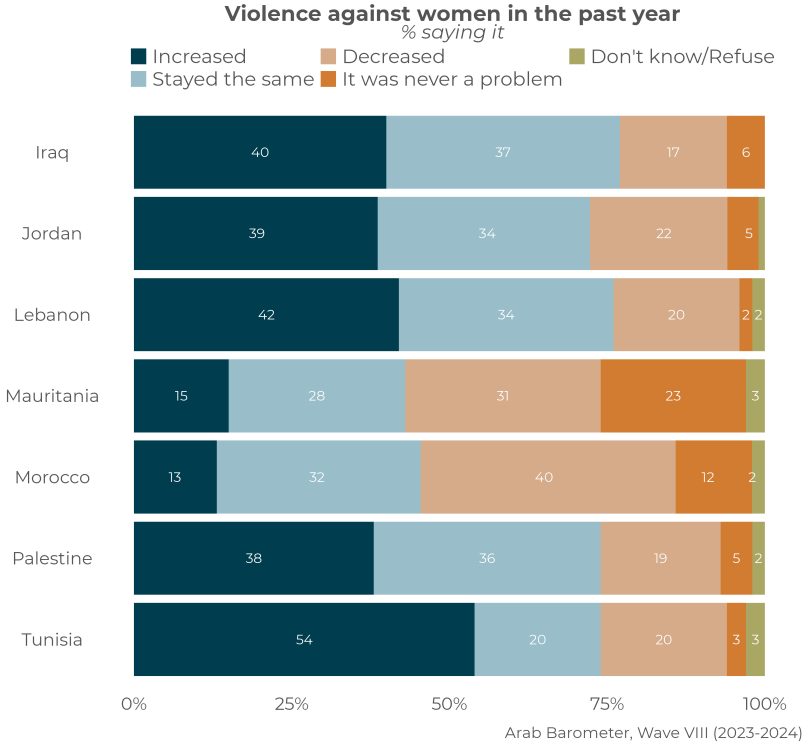
## Executive Summary

According to reports from the World Bank, 40 percent of women across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) have experienced violence from their partner at least once in their lifetime. A report from the OECD found that violence against women in MENA increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings are in-line with the findings from the most recent Arab Barometer 2023-2024 survey, in which a plurality of citizens from nearly every country perceive that violence against women has increased in the past year. Governments across the region are taking actions to combat the rise in violence but more remains to be done.

Despite the dire circumstances, there are points of hope in Arab Barometer's findings as well. In particular, nearly all citizens can point to at least one source of support for women that face abuse. While citizens are highly unlikely to say a woman facing abuse cannot find support, the most commonly cited sources of support are familial rather than institutional. Specifically, support from male family members is seen as far more readily available than support from hospitals or clinics. Relying on family rather than institutions for support is complicated. At best, a lack of institutional support may indicate that citizens do not view the government as particularly invested in supporting women facing gender-based violence. Increasing institutionalized support through funding and outreach with local organizations or healthcare facilities could provide more security for abused women.

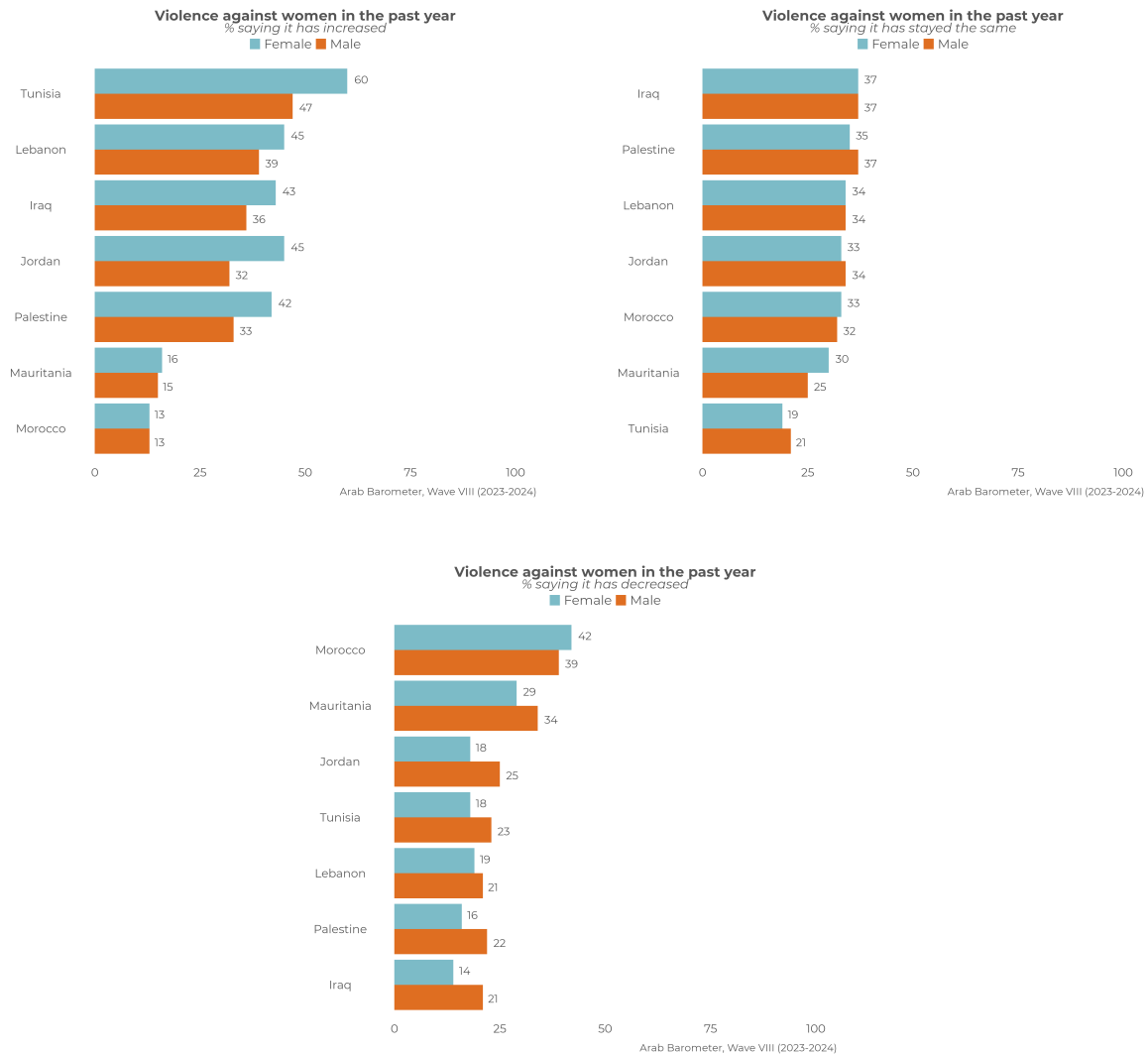
## Perceptions of Rates of Gender Based Violence

In five of seven countries surveyed, a plurality of citizens says violence against women has increased in the past year. In Tunisia (54 percent), Lebanon (42 percent), Iraq (40 percent), Jordan (39 percent), and Palestine (38 percent) the most common response is that gender-based violence increased, while in Morocco (40 percent) and Mauritania (31 percent) a plurality of citizens say gender-based violence decreased.

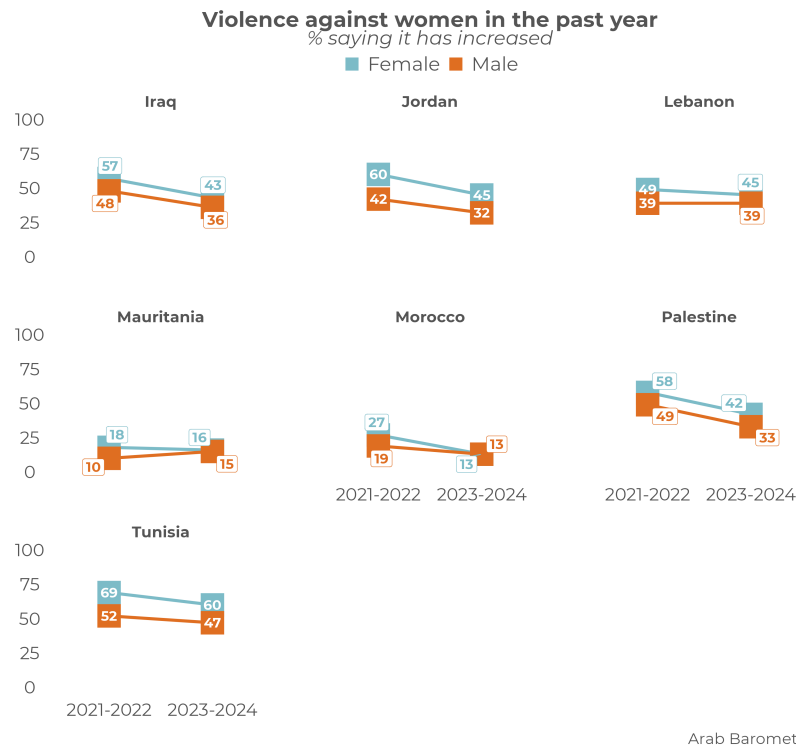


There is a clear and striking gender divide among respondents in most countries. Only in Morocco do men and women mostly agree that violence against women has decreased in the last year. Overall, 42 percent of Moroccan women and 39 percent of Moroccan men say violence against women decreased. Meanwhile in Tunisia and Lebanon, a plurality of men and women both say gender-based violence increased, but at different rates. In Tunisia, women are 13 points more likely than men to say violence increased (60 percent of Tunisia women versus 47 percent of Tunisia men) and women in Iraq and Lebanon are seven and six points, respectively, more likely than men to say violence increased (45 percent of Lebanese women versus 39 percent of Lebanese men; 43 percent of Iraqi women versus 36 percent of Iraqi men). In Jordan and Palestine, 45 percent and 42 percent of women respectively say violence increased, while 34 percent and 37 percent of men respectively say violence against women stayed the same. In Mauritania, 30 percent of women say violence stayed the same, while 34 percent of men say violence decreased.

Arab Barometer – Wave VIII  
Gender-based Violence Report



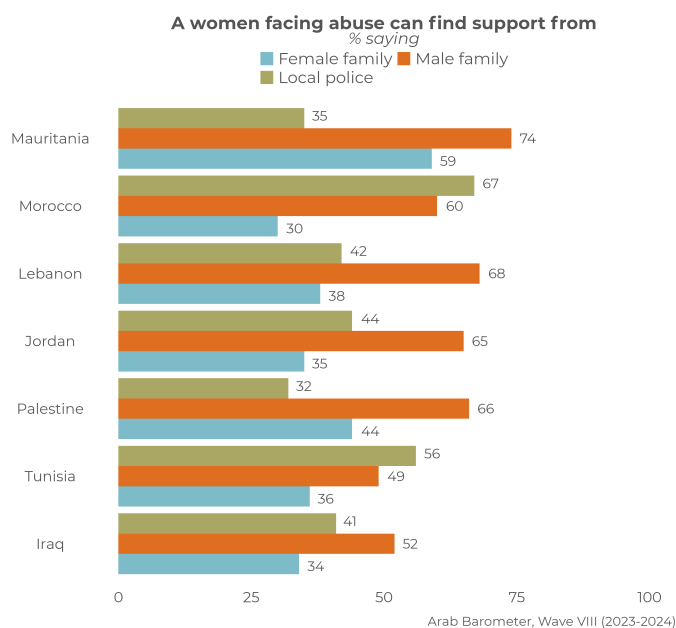
Despite most women in the surveyed countries saying gender-based violence has increased, the overall trend is positive. Since Arab Barometer Wave VII in 2021-2022, the percentage of women saying violence against women increased has dropped significantly in Palestine (-16 points), Jordan (-15 points), Morocco (-14 points), Iraq (-14 points), and Tunisia (-9 points). Even though a plurality of citizens in many countries say gender-based violence increased in the past year, the plurality is smaller than when the question was last asked. Furthermore, citizens are more likely in Wave VIII (2023-2024) than in Wave VII (2021-2022) to say violence has decreased.



The gap between men and women’s perceptions of gender-based violence has decreased as well. Men and women are closer to agreeing on the state of gender-based violence within their country. Despite women increasingly engaging in public life, men still tend to dominate the spaces that dictate public policy. According to the World Bank, on average women in MENA hold just 14 percent of ministerial positions. If men and women have different views on the state of gender-based violence, men may feel as if enough is being done at a policy level while women are still left feeling unprotected. Coming closer to a consensus can help adequately address the issue.

## Who is Helping?

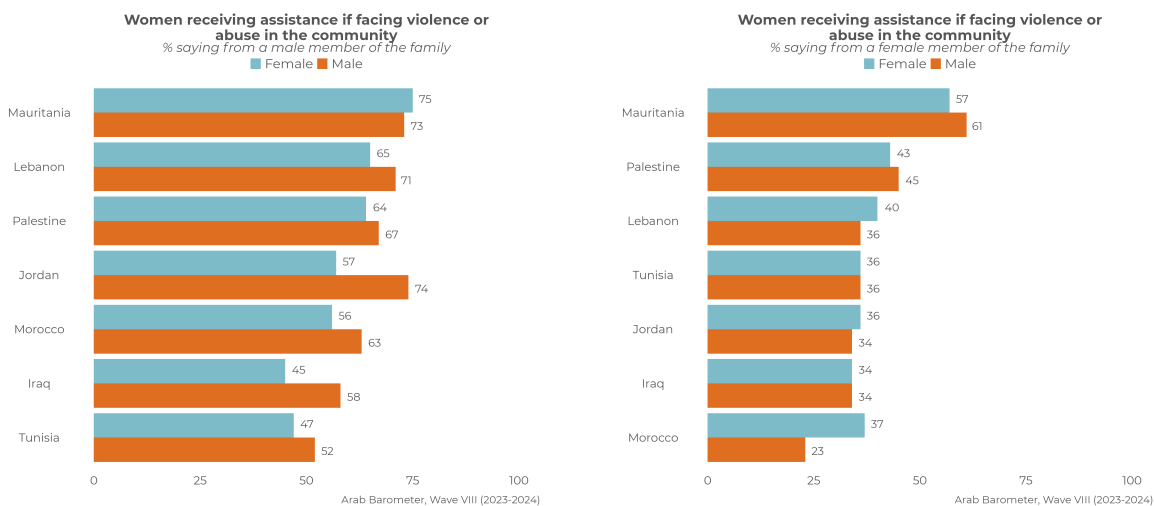
Every country has the same top three most common responses when asked where women facing abuse or violence can go for assistance: a male relative, the police, or a female relative. The differences in perceptions among men and women are especially important in this context. While men are projecting their beliefs about where women can find support, women are reflecting on their own community.



## Family

In most countries, the most common source of assistance for women facing abuse or violence is perceived to be a male relative. In Mauritania (74 percent), Lebanon (68 percent), Jordan (65 percent), Palestine (66 percent), and Iraq (52 percent), a male relative is the most common option chosen by respondents when asked where women facing abuse or violence can seek help. Even though a male relative is not the most common choice in Morocco or Tunisia, it is still a very popular option, selected by 60 percent of Moroccans and 49 percent of Tunisians.

The extent to which a woman can turn to a male relative is viewed differently between men and women. In general, men are more likely than women to say a woman suffering abuse can go to a male relative for help. For example, Jordanian men are 17 points more likely than Jordanian women to say male relatives can serve as a resource for women facing abuse. This suggests men may want to keep these issues within the family instead of working toward a more systematic solution to assist women facing violence or abuse. Moreover, since women are less likely to hold this view, it suggests many would not feel comfortable turning to a male family member to help address this problem, making it more likely problem goes unaddressed.



The difference in perceptions of male relatives is particularly interesting in contrast to the perceived helpfulness of female relatives. In most countries, men and women are equally likely to say a woman facing abuse can turn to a female relative for help. A notable exception is Morocco, where 37 percent of women say a female relative can be helpful compared to only 23 percent of men. Men and women seem to agree on the extent to which women can help other women.

Having a working female relative influences the perception of female relatives as sources of support for women facing abuse. Among both men and women, having a female relative who works tends to be associated with an increase in the belief abused women can turn to their female relatives for help. Since citizens with working female relatives tend to have a higher income and education, the women in these families likely have more resources to offer in assistance.

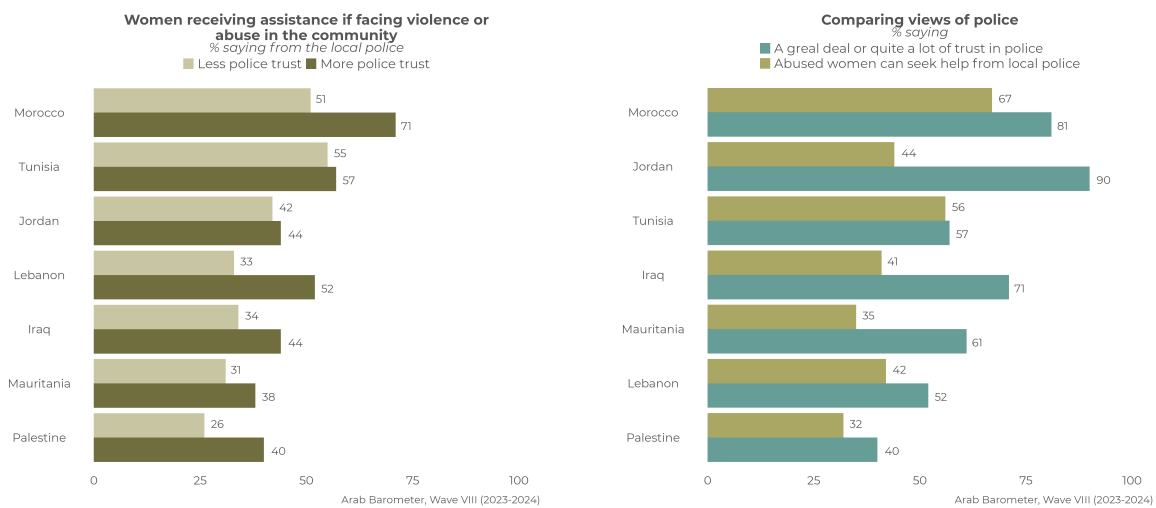
## Police

Confidence in receiving help from the police is mixed. Only in two countries, Morocco and Tunisia, do at least half of the citizens think a woman can receive help from the police if she faces abuse. Overall 67 percent of Moroccans and 56 percent of Tunisians say a woman facing abuse can seek help from the police.

The police are the second most common choice among Lebanese (42 percent), Jordanians (44 percent) and Iraqis (41 percent). In Mauritania and Palestine, however, people are more likely to say women can seek assistance from a female relative than the police. In Mauritania, citizens are 24 points more likely to

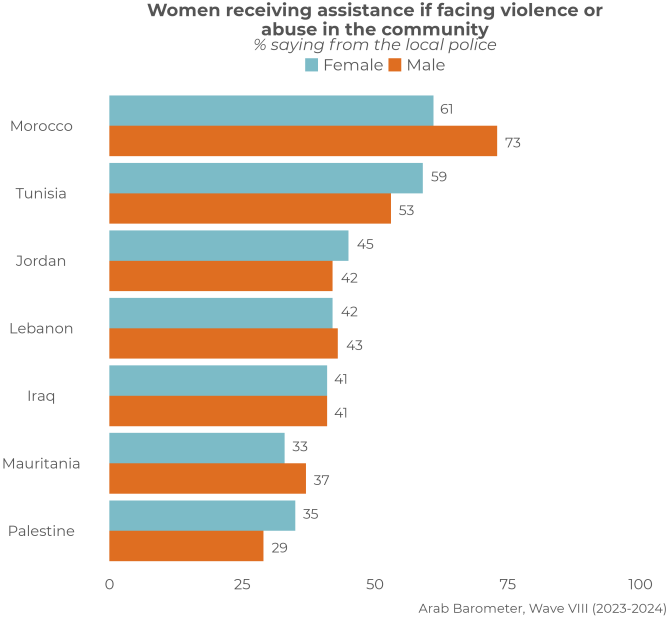
say a female relative than the police can be a source of assistance, and in Palestine, the gap is 12 points.

Notably, Palestinians have the lowest levels of trust in the police in Wave VIII (2023-2024). Unsurprisingly, in most countries, citizens with greater trust in the police are more likely to say women facing abuse can seek assistance from the police. This correlation is limited to individual citizens, however. The overall percent of citizens in a given country who trust the police does not appear to affect the overall confidence a woman facing abuse can seek help from the police. People who express more trust in police are more likely than people who express less trust to say abused women can seek help from police, but the share of population who say women can seek help from police does not correlate with the share of the population who express trust in police. This may suggest that while citizens trust police with policing, they do not necessarily believe that supporting abused women falls under their purview.



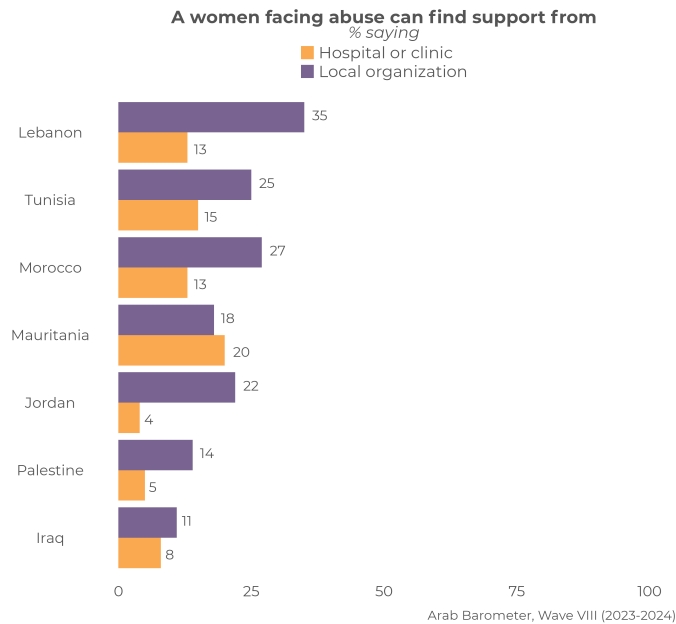
Furthermore, women in all countries surveyed tend to have higher rates of trust in the police than men, but only in Tunisia and Palestine are women more likely to say police can help women facing abuse. The difference in overall trust in police and perception of police help with gender-based violence highlights the sensitive nature of dealing with abuse. Even though women trust police, they do not necessarily believe police can help them with abuse-related issues.





**Hospitals, Clinics, Local Organizations**

Hospitals and clinics or local organizations tend to be the least chosen options for where women facing abuse can turn to. Of the two, citizens generally have more confidence in local organizations. Mauritania is the only country where hospitals and clinics have as much support as local organizations. Local organizations are particularly popular in Lebanon and Jordan. Nearly four in ten Lebanese women and one in four Jordanian women say women facing abuse can find help from a local organization.



Satisfaction with the healthcare system and confidence in hospitals and clinics does not appear to be linked with this perception, which is similar to trust in police and police's perceived ability to help women facing abuse. In both cases, confidence with the system as a whole does not translate to belief that these institutions can offer support in cases of gender-based violence. Supporting women facing abuse is either not considered part of the standard duties of these institutions, or at the very least not weighted especially heavily compared to other responsibilities.

Confidence in local organizations and hospitals or clinics also varies by urbanity. Women from urban areas in Lebanon, Tunisia, and Mauritania are all more likely to say they think women can receive assistance from local organizations. The same is true for clinics or hospitals, clearly demonstrating the importance of access. Rural women facing abuse cannot seek help from local organizations or medical facilities that do not exist.

## Conclusion

Violence against women and girls remains an ongoing and global issue. In the Middle East and North Africa in particular, however, there exist glimmers of a brighter future. Citizens are overall less likely to report that gender-based violence is increasing in their country. Men and women are coming closer to agreeing on the state of gender-based violence in their country. Finally, regardless of

where the help comes from, nearly everyone agrees women who face abuse can find sources of support.

Governments can offer further support for survivors of abuse by addressing issues of access to hospitals and clinics in addition to increasing funding for local organizations. While these institutions are not considered the most helpful options, the disuse seems to be primarily a result of availability. Women cannot find aid in places that do not exist. Increasing the availability of state-funded services, especially in less populated areas, could provide significantly more support to women in need.



## ABOUT ARAB BAROMETER

Arab Barometer is a nonpartisan research network that provides insight into the social, political, and economic attitudes and values of ordinary citizens across the Arab world.

We have been conducting rigorous, and nationally representative public opinion surveys on probability samples of the adult populations across the Arab world since 2006 across 15 countries.

We are the longest-standing and the largest repository of publicly available data on the views of men and women in the MENA region. Our findings give a voice to the needs and concerns of Arab publics.



[ARABBAROMETER.ORG](http://ARABBAROMETER.ORG)



[ARABBAROMETER](https://www.facebook.com/ARABBAROMETER)



[@ARABBAROMETER](https://twitter.com/ARABBAROMETER)